

# B-RAP news

## Business **RECYCLING** Assistance Program

Waste Management Information for South Carolina Businesses

May 3, 2004

## New campaign promotes fluorescent lamp recycling

**COLUMBIA, SC** – A grant to promote the recycling of fluorescent lamps and other lamps containing mercury has been awarded to the University of South Carolina (USC) and the Business Recycling Assistance Program (B-RAP) by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA).

Fluorescent lamps are prevalent in businesses, large retailers, hospitals, schools and government buildings. Most of us are familiar with the four-foot and eight-foot tubes and know that the lamps are energy efficient – using about one-fourth the energy and lasting about 10 times longer than incandescent lamps. Many of us, however, are unaware that fluorescent lamps contain mercury – which is toxic. When broken, compacted, crushed or disposed of improperly, the lamps may release mercury into the air, water and soil, posing a significant risk to human health and the environment. In addition, many of these lamps contain lead, which is a persistent and highly dangerous environmental toxin.

“It is essential for everyone to know the importance of the proper storage, management and recycling of fluorescent lamps,” said Karen Owens, B-RAP project manager. “The best option is to send the lamps to a qualified recycler.”

The grant is part of a national effort to increase awareness in hopes of reaching the U.S. EPA’s fluorescent lamp recycling goal of 70 – 80 percent by 2009. As part of the grant, B-RAP will develop educational materials and hold a series of workshops throughout the state to make businesses and other key audiences aware of the importance of recycling these lamps. USC will assist in tracking the amount of recycling that occurs during the three-year grant period to measure the effectiveness of the outreach campaign.

“Our goal is to encourage building owners, property managers and other key decision makers to properly manage their energy-efficient lighting once it is spent,” Owens said. “There are companies that properly recycle these lamps and our job is to help get that information into the hands of people able to make those types of decisions for their buildings.”

Fluorescent lamps may be managed under the Universal Waste Rule (40 CFR Part 273) in South Carolina allowing businesses, government agencies and other small- and large-quantity generators an opportunity to recycle lamps at the end of life rather than manifesting and disposing of them as a hazardous waste. This approach may result in significant savings for the business or property owner. Furthermore, recycling helps protect the environment from potentially toxic materials. It is important to note that the Universal Waste Rule encourages all generators of fluorescent lamps, including small businesses, to dispose of their used lamps in accordance with the rule’s requirements.

The U.S. EPA estimates that 400 million fluorescent lamps are disposed of annually. While the Association of Lighting and Mercury Recyclers estimates that 20 percent of all fluorescent lamps are recycled nationally, the recycling rate in South Carolina is closer to 5 percent according to Owens. The remainder are disposed of in municipal solid waste landfills.

Anyone interested in learning more about fluorescent lamp recycling is encouraged to call B-RAP through its toll-free recycling hot line at **1-800-768-7348**. Additional information also is available on-line at B-RAP’s Web site, [www.scdhec.gov/brap/html/whatsnew.html](http://www.scdhec.gov/brap/html/whatsnew.html).



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